Introduction to Religious Studies
TTH 10-11:20 am
Swift 403
Autumn Quarter 2000

Instructor: R. Rosengarten (raroseng@midway.uchicago.edu)
Office Hrs.: F 10:00 am – 12 noon, or by appointment

Description: This course juxtaposes readings in select primary and secondary sources to introduce students to the range of methods and materials that constitute the study of religion. The materials are illustrative rather than exhaustive. One theme the course explores is the complex set of relations between the category “religion” and human modes of thought and practice that, in its representation, we term “religious”.

Texts (all available for purchase at the seminary co-operative bookstore)

*The Rule of St. Benedict*
J.G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks*
C. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*
M. Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*
C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*
W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*
M. Luther, *Three Treatises*
T. Paine, *The Age of Reason*
L. Wieseltier, *Kaddish*

Requirements

1. Preparation for and attendance at all class sessions. An unexcused absence will detract 1/3 of a letter from your final grade for the course.
2. Two short papers (3-5 pp.) that deploy elegance of structure and argument with graceful expression to explain the main point of one of the secondary readings, using in the process one of the primary readings both to elucidate and to evaluate the approach of the secondary reading. The sole restriction on your choice of materials is that it may not be one used in the course, ie James on Wieseltier, Otto on Luther, etc. Due October 31st and November 30th.
3. A take-home final examination. Distributed at the final class session, due by 5 pm on the last day of the autumn quarter.

Academic Honesty

Never represent someone else’s work as yours. If you have any doubt about your understanding of this, first consult the University’s statement in the Student Information Manual; if that doesn’t afford sufficient clarity, see a member of the teaching team. With reference to the course, an instance of plagiarism will, when verified, result in a grade of F for the assignment and may, at the discretion of the instructor, result in formal disciplinary action.

Week 1: C. Geertz, “Religion as a Cultural System,” “Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight”

Week 2: The Rule of St. Benedict

Week 3: Bell, Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice

Week 4: Wieseltier, Kaddish

Week 5: James, Varieties of Religious Experience (chapters 1, 2, and 4)

Week 6: Black Elk Speaks

Week 7: Eliade, The Sacred and the Profane

Week 8: Luther, “The Freedom of a Christian,” “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church”


Week 10: Paine, The Age of Reason